

REMARKS

Claims 1-9, 11-16 and 23-31 were pending in the subject application as of the September 8, 2005 mailing date of the current office action, in which claims 15, 16, 23 and 24 were allowed and claims 7, 11, 27 and 28 were indicated as allowable but for depending from a rejected base claim. The remaining pending claims (i.e., claims 1-6, 8, 9, 12-14, 25, 26 and 29-31) stand rejected pursuant to one or more of 35 U.S.C. §§102 and 103.

Summary and Explanation of Claim Amendments/Cancellations

Claim 1 is amended to render it identical to allowed claim 23, which, therefore, is cancelled as is its dependent claim 24. Therefore, claim 1 is allowable, as are its dependent claims 2-5, 9 and 12-14, based at least on the fact that claim 23 was allowed in the current office action. Claims 6-8 are cancelled for consistency with amended claim 1. Claim 11 is amended to change its dependency from cancelled claim 7 to amended claim 1, thus placing it in condition for allowance based at least on its dependence from claim 1. Claim 25 is amended to incorporate the limitations of claim 28, which, as noted above, was indicated in the current office action as being directed to allowable subject matter. For at least this reason claim 25 is allowable, as are its dependent claims 26 and 29-31. Claim 27 is cancelled in view of the amendment to claim 25, as is claim 28. The limitations of claim 27, however, have been combined with those of pending claim 25 and are presented herein as new claim 32, which Applicant submits is allowable based at least on the indication in the current office action that claim 27 is directed to allowable subject matter.

Applicant has amended and canceled these claims solely to expedite prosecution of the subject application. By making these amendments and cancellations, Applicant does not dedicate the subject matter of the amended and/or canceled claims - as filed or as presently pending - to the public, and does not acquiesce to the Examiner's currently or previously identified reason(s) offered in support of the rejections of the amended and/or canceled claims. Applicant also reserves the right to seek patent protection for claims similar or identical to the amended and/or canceled claims - as filed and/or as presently pending - in one or more related applications.

In sum, all pending claims of the subject application are either cancelled without prejudice (i.e., claims 6-8, 23, 24 and 28), allowed (i.e., claims 15 and 16), allowable based at least on the fact that they are amended herein to incorporate allowable subject matter (i.e., claims 1 and 25), allowable based at least on the fact that they depend either directly or ultimately from a claim that has been amended to incorporate allowable subject matter (i.e., claims 2-5, 9, 11-14, 26, 27, 29-31), or allowable as a newly presented claim that incorporates allowable subject matter in independent form (i.e., claim 32).

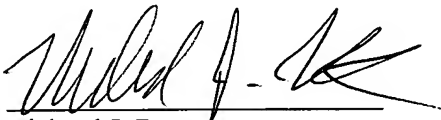
Thus, the pending rejections are moot and the subject application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-5, 9, 11-14, 25, 26 and 29-31 are respectfully requested, as are initial consideration and allowance of new claim 32. If the undersigned can be of any assistance in advancing the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact him by using the information provided below.

Fees

This submission is being timely filed, thus no extension fee is believed to be due in connection with this submission. Moreover, the number of new claims being added herein (one new independent claim) equals or exceeds the number of claims being canceled herein (six total claims being canceled, one of which are independent). Thus, no added claims fees are believed to be due in connection with this submission. However, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any necessary fees associated with this submission, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 50-0289.

Respectfully submitted,

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